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The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) provides two types of examinations to evaluate the nontraditional educational background of adults wishing to pursue college level studies. Five multiple-choice tests (the General Examinations) are designed to assess general or liberal arts background as compared to two years of undergraduate education. The Subject Examinations are tied more closely to specific fields or subjects and include an optional essay portion. Both series are available through an institutional administration or one of 57 CLEP centers. Colleges are using the examinations for admission, placement, and other purposes. Nearly 400 colleges and many other institutions and agencies have indicated that they will award credit on the basis of CLEP testing. (ly)

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Evaluating Adults for Further Study

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Paper presented at

The National Seminar on Adult Education Research

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"Evaluating Adults for Further Study"

The evaluation of the academic background of an adult who wishes to pursue college-level studies, whether as a regularly enrolled or special adult program student, is one of the most challenging problems which faces adult educators as well as other members of the faculty and administration. Often, such adults have been discouraged from continuing their education when they are told that they must "start at the beginning" since there is no reliable device whereby their nontraditional education can be evaluated. The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) hopes to satisfy this need, that is, act as the honest broker between the adult student and the colleges. Nearly 400 colleges, and a number of non-collegiate institutions and agencies, have already indicated that they will award credit on the basis of the two types of examinations offered in CLEP, the General and the Subject Examinations.

The General Examinations are designed to evaluate an individual's general or liberal arts background compared with a student who successfully completes two years of undergraduate education. Consequently, the General Examinations are composed of five multiple-choice tests in English Composition, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences-History, and Humanities. National norms at the end of the freshman, sophomore, and senior years are available as well as norms based on 43,000 USAFI candidates who took the entire battery of the General Examinations.

The Subject Examinations are tied more closely to specific courses or subjects and include an optional essay portion. Twenty-nine Subject Examinations are now available or are in the process of development in both the traditional as well as vocational-technical fields. Like the General Examinations, the Subject Examinations are available through an institutional administration or one of the 57 CLEP Centers. The latter are located in the large urban areas throughout the United States where the examinations are given during the third week of each month.

Colleges have elected to use the examinations in many different ways and with both traditional as well as non traditional students. For example, the General Examinations are being used by Queens College for the purpose of assisting with the screening, admission and placement of students who want to enroll in a special programs for adults. The scores are used with an extensive application form and an interview for an initial screening of the applicants. After admission the results of the General Examinations are further used to place those students scoring well on the tests in advanced courses or as a basis for the waiver of certain requirements of the special program. For a number of years the University of Omaha has used the General Examinations with hundreds of military "Bootstrap" students. The University's policy is to accept six credits for each of the five tests of the General Examinations. And, over the years, the average Bootstrap student has been awarded 21 semester hours of credit through this procedure. It is interesting to note that these Bootstrapers' academic average is 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

Adult educators interested in obtaining additional information about CLEP should write to the College-Level Examination Program, College Entrance Examination Board, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York 10027 (212, 865-9500).